

Conference Abstract

Bridging Language Barriers: Lessons from the French Translation of Latimer Core

Elie M Saliba[‡], Jutta Buschbom[§], Sharon Grant[|], Janeen Jones[|], Ben Norton[¶], Maarten Trekels[#], Kate Webbink[|]

[‡] GBIF France, PatriNat, centre d'expertise et de données sur la nature, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, OFB, IRD, Paris, France

[§] Statistical Genetics, Ahrensburg, Germany

[|] Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL, United States of America

[¶] Independent, Raleigh, NC, United States of America

[#] Meise Botanic Garden, Meise, Belgium

Corresponding author: Elie M Saliba (elie.saliba@mnhn.fr)

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Abstract

Internationalization of standards documentation is essential for pursuing global interoperability through the adoption of data standards that can be understood and competently applied throughout the world and across sociocultural contexts. Ratified by Biodiversity Information Standards ([TDWG](#)) in 2024, the [Latimer Core](#) (LtC) data standard focuses on the representation and discovery of natural science collections (Woodburn et al. 2022). The first complete translation of the LtC standard documentation*¹ was published in June 2025 into French facilitating access to the standard for francophone communities.

Translating biodiversity data standards such as Latimer Core into French presents a series of intertwined linguistic and technical challenges. The rigor of the translation effort depends on consistent terminology inside a given standard, and is achieved through careful reuse of formulas, such as 'recommended best practice', and the support of translation management tools such as Crowdin*² to ensure uniformity. In addition to intra-standard consistency, the reuse of Darwin Core terms, which were translated prior to the

ratification of Latimer Core (see Saliba et al. (2025)), requires caution when retranslating definitions, to ensure homogeneity across standards.

Aside from linguistic elements discussed in part in Saliba et al. (2025), challenges like documenting translation work remain. The latter is largely informal, relying on collaborative platforms and personal notes, which underscore the potential need for more structured, reproducible workflows, especially in the context of multiple translators working together on a given language, notably those with strong regional variants. Similarly, no universal threshold has been defined for the minimum content needed to achieve a “functional” translation. An incremental approach, beginning with labels and definitions and progressively expanding to webpage elements such as headers and footers, non-normative complementary information and supplementary documentation seems to emerge as good practice. To address these issues and others, a recommendation document aimed at defining good practices and workflows for translating standards is being prepared.

Finally, the Latimer Core maintenance group is experimenting with having a point of contact for translation to act as a bridge between translators, the standard maintenance group, and users. The point of contact can answer domain-specific questions, gather feedback from users and report errors to the relevant translator.

Ensuring that TDWG standards are available in French is a good way to broaden participation among underrepresented scientific communities across Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and other francophone regions. Beyond opening doors for these audiences, the translation process itself offers a unique opportunity for contributors to deepen their understanding of a standard while making it, and subsequently connected standards, accessible to others. Far from being a mere technical task, translation is an intellectually rewarding and collaborative endeavor that amplifies the global relevance of TDWG’s work—ultimately enriching both the standards and the communities they serve.

Keywords

data standards, documentation, work process, language

Presenting author

Elie M. Saliba

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Endnotes

*1 <https://lrc.tdwg.org/terms/fr/>

*2 <https://crowdin.com/>